

Jeopardy Assessment

for the proposed incidental taking authorization of the Butler's gartersnake

Waukesha Walmart
Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Background

The state-threatened Butler's gartersnake was listed in 1997 and is the smallest of the five Wisconsin gartersnake species. This species requires a moderately open to open canopy habitat, preferably with both upland and wetland habitat. Butler's naturally hibernate in open-canopy wetlands (sedge meadows, fringes of cattail marshes, etc.) but are also known to occupy sites that provide other means for successful overwintering (i.e. old landfills where conditions provide access below the frostline and where adequate moisture exists). Both sexes of this species reach maturity during their second full year and females deliver 4-19 live-born young in mid- to late summer.

The Butler's gartersnake is a colonial species that is restricted to several southeastern counties in Wisconsin. Most sites that have been moderately to heavily surveyed for Butler's show a healthy age-class structure, indicating that regular recruitment is occurring. Additional surveys and monitoring have found that Butler's gartersnakes often occur in very large numbers on even relatively small sites (i.e. 400+ snakes detected on a 20-acre site) and can occur, sometimes in high numbers, on highly disturbed and degraded sites. Populations on disturbed sites can most likely be sustained if the disturbance factors are eliminated and suitable wetlands are present on or adjacent to the sites.

Jeopardy Assessment

Culvert and sidewalk installation associated with a Walmart construction project in Waukesha will be impacting a small portion of suitable Butler's gartersnake habitat that is part of a significant conservation (Tier 3) site. This project has the potential to cause incidental take of the Butler's gartersnake, however, the Department has determined that the proposed project has taken appropriate measures to minimize impacts to the Butler's gartersnake, the taking is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence or recovery of the state population of the Butler's gartersnake or the whole plant-animal community of which it is a part, and the action has benefit to the public that justifies the action.

Conservation Measures

The conservation measures listed below must be met in order for the pending Incidental Take Authorization (ITA) to be issued and remain in effect once issued

1. Install and maintain snake exclusion fencing around the area of disturbance. Snake fencing must be installed during the snake's inactive season, November 6-March 15.
2. A qualified herpetologist must be on site during construction to move any snakes within the fenced area to the non-construction side of the fence.
3. Any suitable habitat that will be temporarily disturbed in the construction area must be restored to existing conditions.